8:Park E-5 (1933-1935) 1937
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

American Anthropologist

NEW SERIES

ORGAN OF THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, THE AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK AND THE PHILADELPHIA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

LESLIE SPIER, *Editor*
MELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS, CORNELIUS OSGOOD, F. H. H. ROBERTS, JR., AND FRANK SPECK, *Associate Editors*

VOLUME 39

MENASHA, WISCONSIN, U. S. A.

PUBLISHED BY

THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

1937
[Title Page]

8:Park E-5 (1933-1935) 1937
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

PAVIOTSO POLYANDRY

101 114 595 171 584 595

In a recent issue of the AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST[1] Dr Julian Steward reports the occurrence of polyandry among the Shoshoni groups of eastern Nevada and southern Idaho. Their immediate neighbors to the west, the Paviotso or Northern Paiute of Nevada, are said not to have followed the practice. However, unpublished field data gathered among the Paviotso on the reservations at Walker River and Pyramid Lake indicate that polyandrous marriages were arranged in the past.

In the few cases recorded polyandry was always fraternal and never involved

[1] American Anthropologist, Vol. 38, pp. 654–56, 1936.
[1] Vol. 38, pp. 561–64, 1936.

8:Park E-5 (1933-1935) 1937

NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

more than two brothers. In one of these marriages, the union was first arranged between a woman and an older brother. Some time later the younger brother took up residence with the couple and the girl's parents, and was then considered a co-husband. The three slept in the same house and apparently lived together without any noticeable friction. When a child was born to the wife, both men claimed fatherhood and were so regarded by public opinion. It was not possible to learn whether or not the child addressed both by the term for father.

Another polyandrous marriage was arranged between the parents of a girl and two brothers. The brothers visited the girl's parents and talked over the matter. The brothers, reaching an agreement with the parents with no objection offered by the woman, came to live in the house of the parents-in-law. A preliminary discussion involving the consent of the parents and the girl is the usual practice in arranging Paviotso marriages. The practice of polyandry seems to differ from the usual pattern of Paviotso marriage only in respect to courtship. It was customary for the prospective husband to visit nightly the home of the girl whom he had selected as a prospective wife. He would sit quietly until the family went to bed. Usually he slept by the door and when morning came, he got up and without a word returned to his home. This continued for weeks, sometimes even months, until the girl's parents indicated by addressing him pleasantly and by offering him food that he was acceptable as a son-in-law. Then when the family retired he lay down with the girl and, if she did not get up and move her bed, they had intercourse and were then looked upon as married. Thereafter the husband lived with his wife's parents. This courtship, frequently a long drawn out affair, does not seem to have been practiced in the few instances of polyandrous marriages recorded.

There is no evidence to indicate that these were considered temporary unions for either of the brothers. In the first instance mentioned, the two husbands lived with the woman until her death. Public opinion seems to have regarded these marriages as permanent, as much so as any other marital arrangements. In this connection it may also be noted that informants were almost unanimous in holding that marriages in the old days were not frequently dissolved. Although the number of instances of polyandry was small, this permanency seems also to be characteristic of such marriages.

As in other marital unions, polyandrous marriages were not marked by ceremony or exchange of gifts. A marriage is thought of as established when a man and a woman have had sexual relations. When a man and woman, one man and several women, or two men and a woman are known to be living together and having sexual relations, they are regarded by public opinion as married without further formalities.

In the matter of residence polyandrous marriages conformed to the usual Paviotso practice. The husbands in all known cases went to live in the house of the wife's parents. The sons-in-law were then expected to contribute their efforts to the economic support of the household.

There is no evidence that one husband was always absent from the home. In fact, from the discussions of people who have heard of the practice, it seems that the

8:Park E-5 (1933-1935) 1937
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

592
595 two husbands, the wife, and her parents lived together harmoniously in the usual one-roomed house. As with the much more frequent polygynous marriages there seems to have been no outward manifestations of sexual jealousy.

595 Under present conditions it is impossible to get an accurate idea of the frequency of polyandrous marriages. There can be no doubt, however, from the recorded material that polyandry was not a common practice. Certainly, it has had no observable influence on kinship terms such as has been noted by Dr Steward.[3] Nevertheless, such marriages were socially recognized as legitimate unions. It is possible that the Paviotso learned the practice from their eastern neighbors, the Shoshoni, for several informants were acquainted with the Shoshoni custom of polyandry.

182
595 It is difficult to see in the Paviotso institution of polyandry any organic connection with economic factors. Marriage involves no exchange of property, and women in their activities as providers of wild vegetable food have an economic role as im-
[428] portant as that of men. Moreover, groves of pine trees, the only form of property to be inherited, belong to the family. As there is no fixed line of descent for such property, use is the more important factor in determining ownership.

595 There can be no doubt that, as Dr Steward has indicated with the Shoshoni,[3] Paviotso polyandry is linked with the levirate. On the other hand, the Paviotso,
587 unlike the Shoshoni, do not practice any form of preferential mating. Although
[588] Dr Steward holds that there is no excess of marriageable males to account for the development of the Shoshoni practice,[4] it is quite likely that among the Paviotso the relatively frequent occurrence of polygynous marriages, in some cases involving as many as four wives to a man, may have resulted in an occasional shortage of available females. Under these circumstances the extension of the privileges of brothers, usually recognized only at the death of one, while both are living, then becomes intelligible. Given these two conditions, the relatively infrequent practice of polyandry may have developed indigenously among the Paviotso or, as may appear more likely to the diffusionist, the practice was copied from the neighboring Shoshoni, where it seems to have occurred more frequently and to have exerted greater influence on such aspects of the social life as the kinship system.

WILLARD Z. PARK

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS